



From the Ground Up

Recreating a flatwoods community

Donor sites, recipient sites, harvests and speedy transplants. These terms might make you think of human surgery, but they also apply to natural resources restoration. Almost 50 acres in

the Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW) in southwest Florida are undergoing this type of renewal.

Once a wet, or “hydric” flatwoods, boasting broad expanses of native grasses and wildflowers, like a savannah with scattered trees, one section of the land was most recently used as a bahia grass pasture, and one was infested with Brazilian pepper. Bahia grass is native to Argentina, and Brazilian pepper hails, as its name suggests, from Brazil. These exotic plants force out native plants, and can make the lands inhospitable to native wildlife too.



Saw palmetto is just one of the native upland plants being added to the site.

Now, these uplands are being restored. That process is more difficult in some ways than restoring wetlands, where many native plants remain dormant and quickly bloom again once natural conditions are restored. “But when natural conditions in uplands are restored, you can’t count on native upland plants to come back on their own,” said Marjorie Moore, the District’s mitigation program manager. And, she added, installing individual plants can be very expensive.

“That’s why the District is helping jump start this flatwoods community by seeding

cleared areas with groundcovers native to these habitats,” said Moore. Those plants include tickseed (state wildflower), wiregrass, lopsided Indiangrass and saw palmetto.

To make sure the new plants take hold, the recipient site must be free and clear of the former vegetation. That process may seem simple, but had to be completed in two stages. While the main part of the land clearing took two months, initial clearing stages took several years, according to Jim Goodwin, District land manager for the CREW lands. Just before the seeds were spread in December, the soil was leveled, providing a smooth, blank canvas for a new “portrait landscape” to be created.

Meanwhile, the donor sites, at Avon Park Bombing Range and Triple Diamond Ranch near Basinger, had to be prepared. Last spring, a controlled fire helped ensure healthy new growth of the needed native plants with strong, hardy seeds that would be ready for harvest in the fall.

The seeds are harvested mechanically and by hand. Tons of harvested seed, heaped high in trucks, must be quickly transported, because seeds can overheat, and become unusable. One load will be enough to cover one acre.

The cost per acre of the seed harvest and planting, which was completed under contract, was \$1,200. Mitigation funds from developers impacting wetlands were used to defray the costs.

In coming months, as the seed takes hold, regular monitoring and spot treatment of exotic vegetation will help ensure the project’s success. Gradually, over the coming years, the site will grow into a thriving, picture-perfect hydric flatwoods landscape.

Ask Freddy!



Question selected from District letters and emails received from the public.

Q Does the District have specific plans in place to protect the regional water supply system from terrorist attacks and wartime activities?

A Yes, the SFWMD works regularly with the Federal Homeland Security Department and the State of Florida Emergency Operations Department along with local, state and federal law enforcement agencies to protect District facilities and structures. The District is a key member of the Regional Domestic Security Task Force and follows general guidelines as well as very specific guidelines for protecting the regional water system.

Without citing specific measures being taken, it is safe to say that the District has committed resources to increase protection efforts and remains in a heightened mode of awareness with regard to protecting District structures, facilities and employees as well as the public.

Who is Freddy?

His full name is “Freddy the Friendly Alligator.” He is the South Florida Water Management District’s mascot.

You may have seen him on the signs that mark the region’s canals and rivers.

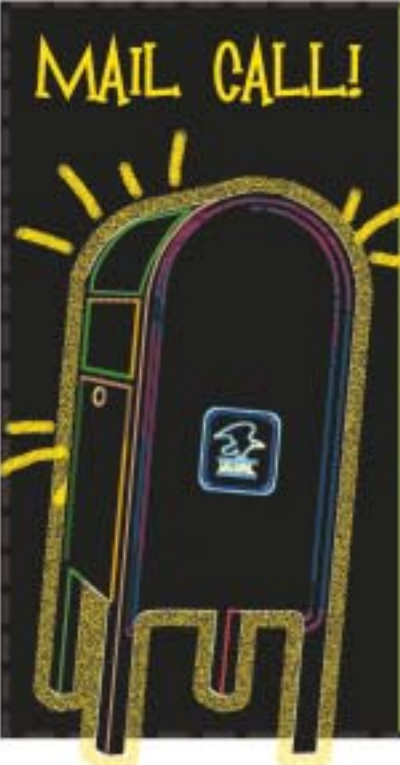
Alligators are nature’s water managers, and are what most people picture when they think about Florida. Alligators dig deep holes in the swamp where they “hang out.” When drought strikes, these “gator holes” provide water and food (fish, turtles, insects) for many other species such as wading birds. At the same time, any creature sharing the alligator’s territory could become its lunch! That’s why people should remember that alligators are wild animals which should be admired, but also avoided.



All Wrapped Up

Starting in March, buses in Miami-Dade County will be all wrapped up, with many places to go. For one year, the fleet of seven buses and 141 bus benches will be carrying the water conservation message: “Florida’s Water: It’s Worth Saving” in English, Spanish and Creole.

The project is a partnership between the Miami-Dade Water and Sewer Department (MDWASD) and the District, to encourage residents to make water conservation a way of life all year. The “wrapped” buses and benches were rolled out at a ceremony on March 17. Pictured above (left to right): Nicolás Gutiérrez, Jr., District Governing Board Chair; Rebeca Sosa, Miami-Dade County Commissioner; William M. Brant, MDWASD Director; Dr. Barbara Carey-Shuler, Miami-Dade County Commission Chair; Irela Bagué, District Governing Board Member; and John Mulliken District Water Supply Department Deputy Director.



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CREDITS

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The South Florida Water Management District is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state. It is the oldest and largest of the state’s five water management districts.

Our mission is to manage and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems, and water supply.

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